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Executive Director

Martha J. Kegel

May 8, 2019

Dear Members of the City Council:

At its meeting today, the Advocacy Committee of the UNITY of Greater New Orleans collaborative of agencies voted to oppose Proposed Ordinance 32,626. The committee only recently had time to carefully consider this ordinance. We applaud the Council's concern about the serious problem of homelessness in our city, we applaud the City's ongoing work in trying to keep homeless camps sanitary, and we look forward to working with you on strategies designed to reduce homelessness in an effective and humanitarian manner.

Our concerns about this ordinance are the following:

- 1) We believe that the City should always uphold the human rights of homeless persons. In this case the City should abide by the 72-hour notice requirement that the City Attorney had previously agreed to uphold.
- 2) We believe that the designation of up to ten Temporary Emphasis Areas, each up to a ¼-mile in radius, which would change every 14 days, and which would result in removal of any personal property in these areas, would exacerbate the tremendous stress that homeless people already are suffering, because they would need to constantly move around in order to prevent their possessions from being taken. In addition, this constant moving of homeless persons would actually make it more difficult for outreach workers to house them, because outreach workers would not know where to find their clients throughout the complex process of getting them housed. Therefore, the ordinance could prolong homelessness.
- 3) The ordinance contemplates that shelter, outreach services and social services are available for the homeless, and in fact requires signage advertising the availability of shelter and services, when in fact there is an acute shortage of shelter and services for the homeless. There are not enough shelter beds or rent assistance to house all the persons living on the street. On any given night there are 430 persons sleeping in places unfit for human habitation, and many more such persons over the course of a year, yet UNITY has only five full-time street outreach workers. In our opinion, the request for data about services provided to persons in camps that have been remediated would be time-consuming and of limited benefit because resources are not currently available to assist the majority of them.
- 4) The ordinance would increase the amount of time and attention spent on removing homeless people's possessions and moving homeless people around, neither of which will reduce homelessness.

Most important, we would like to see the Council and the Administration develop resources that would result in a significant reduction in homelessness, by creating a Local Rent Assistance and Rapid Resolution Fund to prevent and end homelessness by providing short-term rent assistance, case management, and housing crisis resolution services.

We deeply appreciate your consideration of our concerns, and we look forward to providing you useful data and becoming close partners in the work of continuing to reduce homelessness in New Orleans.

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**A COLLABORATIVE OF 60 ORGANIZATIONS
ENDING HOMELESSNESS TOGETHER**

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Sincerely,



Martha J. Kegel
Executive Director



Vicki Judice
Advocacy Committee Co-Chair



Leslie Bouie
Advocacy Committee Co-Chair



Joseph Heeren-Mueller
Director of Community Engagement



Jane L. Johnson
Board Member



Austin Penny
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UNITY Board